

---

## TABLE OF CONTENTS FOR CHAPTER 6

<b>ABSTRACT .....</b>	<b>121</b>
<b>WESTERN HEMISPHERE .....</b>	<b>122</b>
MEXICO .....	122
HAITI .....	122
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC .....	123
CUBA .....	123
CANADA .....	123
<b>EUROPE .....</b>	<b>124</b>
POLAND .....	124
IRELAND .....	124
RUSSIA AND THE COMMONWEALTH OF INDEPENDENT STATES.....	124
BOSNIA .....	124
<b>MIDDLE EAST .....</b>	<b>125</b>
IRAQ .....	125
<b>SOUTH ASIA.....</b>	<b>125</b>
INDIA .....	125
PAKISTAN .....	125
<b>EAST ASIA .....</b>	<b>126</b>
CHINA.....	126
HONG KONG .....	126
INDOCHINA/VIETNAM.....	126
<b>AFRICA.....</b>	<b>127</b>

This page is intentionally left blank.

---

## The Foreign Policy Impact of Immigration

---

### Abstract

Immigration issues continue to play an important role in the foreign relations of the United States. U.S. immigration laws have traditionally been generous, supporting family reunification and refugee protection and providing a source of skilled labor. Because of its democratic style of government and sound economic opportunities, the United States has long been the favored destination of large numbers of immigrants. The participation of immigrants in the fabric of American life has strengthened the relationships between their native countries and the United States.

Many countries strongly support a generous U.S. immigration and asylum policy, which provides not only an outlet for workers and professional unable to find employment at home, but also for refugees looking for protection from persecution. As a result, many foreign governments pay close attention to U.S. immigration law and policy. Many have closely followed the effect of the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 on their nationals in the United States. Foreign governments will follow continuing public and Congressional debates as to whether additional changes to the law should be made.

The number of immigrant visas issued by the State Department from 1995 to 1997 fluctuated. In 1995, 409,405 immigrant visas were issued reflecting a 9 percent decrease from 1994. This decrease was due largely to the ending of the Transition Visa Program for spouses and minor children of persons who were legalized under the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986. In 1996, 425,930 immigrant visas were issued, reflecting a 4 percent increase from 1995. This increase was due largely to a greater number of immediate relative visas available. In 1997, 418,889 immigrant visas were issued, reflecting a 1.7 percent decrease from 1996. This slight decrease was attributable to lower limits on family-sponsored preference categories.

U.S. Department of State  
Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration  
Washington, D.C. 20520

## Western Hemisphere

The United States continued to be a magnet for immigration from the Western Hemisphere. Geographic proximity and increasingly close economic relationships with its neighbors have continued to promote immigration in recent years. The Western Hemisphere accounts for the largest volume of immigration from any region in the world.

### Mexico

Mexico, with a population of 95 million and an annual growth rate of nearly 2 percent, provided more legal and illegal immigrants to the United States than any other nation. From 1995 to 1997, Mexico remained at the head of the top 10 countries receiving immigrant visas to the United States. Mexico remained an oversubscribed country, meaning that it produced more visa applications than were available to the country. Also in 1995 and 1997, Mexico was responsible for one of the highest numbers of U.S. asylum applications.

Mexico's level of economic prosperity had a direct impact on the United States as it affects trade and migration. In 1994, Mexico joined the North America Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) which has increased economic ties among the United States, Canada, and Mexico. This trade agreement helped the economy of Mexico grow by 3.5 percent in 1994, and Mexico now accounts for 10 percent of U.S. trade. However, in 1995, Mexico experienced a severe financial crisis, which required international financial assistance, including a \$20 billion loan from the United States. So long as significant disparities in wages and job opportunities remain between the U.S. and Mexican labor markets, permanent or seasonal migration to the United States will continue to have strong appeal to Mexicans.

The U.S. – Mexico Binational Commission is a cabinet-level body that meets annually to address issues of concern on both sides of the border, including migration and border affairs. The Commission has working groups, including one on Migration and Consular Affairs, which maintain a regular dialogue on immigration issues.

The Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 addressed changes in border enforcement, alien smuggling, document fraud, employment of aliens and public benefits, all of which directly affected Mexican migration to the United States.

### Haiti

Immigration has long been an important issue in our bilateral relationship with Haiti. Haiti is the least-developed country in the Western Hemisphere and one of the poorest, most densely populated countries in the world. Recent large-scale emigration to the United States, and secondarily to Canada and Caribbean neighbors, has resulted in about one out of every six Haitians living abroad.

In 1995, fostering democracy in Haiti was important for many reasons, not the least of which is its geographical proximity to the continental United States. In addition to the steady stream of legal immigrants to the United States, tens of thousands of undocumented Haitian migrants were intercepted at sea by the U.S. Coast Guard during the 1991-1994 period of illegal military rule. In 1994, migrants who refused to return to Haiti were provided a safe haven at Guantanamo Bay Naval Station in Cuba. Subsequent U.S. military intervention, resulting in President Aristide's ultimate return to power, ended the exodus.

From 1995 to 1997, Haiti was one of the top 10 countries whose nationals were issued U.S. immigrant visas. The United States also received one of the largest numbers of asylum applications from Haitians. In December 1997, the United States conferred Deferred Enforcement Departure status on Haitians who were paroled into the United States or who had not applied for asylum.

The refugee admission ceiling for Haiti decreased over 50 percent from 1995 to 1997. This was a result of continued democratic development and regional peace efforts, which virtually ended the flight of persons. In 1996, the in-country screening program was closed. If unrest arises again, the potential remains for mass outflow of Haitian migrants.

## **Dominican Republic**

Immigration to the United States from the Dominican Republic has decreased since 1995. The number of immigrant visas issued to Dominicans declined approximately 50 percent since 1994. The stricter affidavit-of-support requirement could have contributed to the decline. Despite this decrease, the Dominican Republic consistently remains one of the top 10 countries to receive U.S. immigrant visas and is therefore considered a high admission country.

The United States has a strong interest in a democratic, stable and economically healthy Dominican Republic. Its standing as the largest Caribbean economy, the second largest in terms of population and land mass, and its proximity to the United States and other small Caribbean nations make the Dominican Republic an important partner in hemispheric affairs. The Dominican Republic has worked closely with U.S. law enforcement officials on issues such as control of contraband and illegal immigration from Haiti.

## **Cuba**

Migration is one of the few areas in which the U.S. government and the Cuban government have a formal bilateral agreement. The original agreement was signed in 1984 in the wake of the Mariel Boatlift. Since that time, immigrant visa and refugee processing at the U.S. Interests Section in Havana has frequently been affected by the overall state of U.S. – Cuba relations.

The Castro regime has altered between obstruction and facilitation of departures and has not hesitated to play the “migration card.” In the summer of 1994, the Cubans stopped enforcing restrictions on departures. The resulting outflow of “rafters” into the Florida straits led to a new agreement in which the United States promised to admit 20,000 persons each year with immigrant visas, refugee or parole status, who would apply and be interviewed in Havana. This agreement resulted in a new U.S. policy of returning rafters to Cuba after asylum screenings.

Under the 1994 agreement, it was anticipated that parolees, some of whom are selected in a special lottery to reach the 20,000 annual minimum, would augment immigrant visa and refugee cases. Yet, despite this new agreement, the issuance of immigrant visas in Havana peaked at 6,040 in 1995 and declined to 2,999 in 1997. In 1997 the Government of Cuba imposed extraordinarily high exit fees, which could explain the decreasing numbers. The vast majority of the refugee admissions in 1996 and 1997 were identified through the in-country processing in Havana pursuant to the 1994 agreement.

## **Canada**

Canadian and U.S. immigration officials have a history of close cooperation on immigration issues. Like the United States, Canada is a major immigrant and refugee resettlement country that also faces serious problems of controlling the entry of an unprecedented wave of illegal immigrants and individuals seeking asylum. In the early 1990’s, the Canadian government passed new comprehensive legislation that reformed Canadian immigration policy. In particular, the new legislation streamlined asylum processing. The Canadians have been very interested in European efforts to standardize asylum policies and have suggested that similar efforts be made in North America. Canada and the United States have a continuing dialogue on asylum and immigration issues of mutual concern, particularly the questions of border security and how to reduce asylum shopping.

## Europe

### Poland

Poland made great progress in the 1990's toward achieving a fully democratic government and a market economy. Poland applied to become a full member of NATO and has entered into negotiations towards accession to the European Union.

Immigration issues have long been a major concern in Poland because of strong family ties with the Polish community in the United States. In 1996, the number of immigrant visas issued to Polish nationals made Poland one of the top 10 countries to receive U.S. visas. The demand for immigration to the United States remained high.

### Ireland

Emigration has long been a vital element in the U.S.–Irish relationship. Developments in U.S. immigration law are of major importance to the Irish government and public and are a frequent topic in official discussions and parliamentary debate. Emigration patterns have been closely linked to Irish economic conditions, and emigration to the United States has declined significantly with Ireland's economic boom in the 1990's. For the first time in modern history, immigration to Ireland, especially of non-Europeans, is a growing phenomenon.

Ireland has benefited from several programs to increase diversity among the immigrant population to the United States.

### Russia and the Commonwealth of Independent States

Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union in December 1991, increased freedom of travel has become standard in Russia and most of the newly independent states (NIS). Therefore, the number of Russian visa applicants rose dramatically from 1995 to 1997.

The United States continues to operate a major refugee resettlement program from the former Soviet Union in categories of religious minorities prescribed by statute and other individuals of concern. During the period from 1995 to 1997, the highest number of refugees resettled in the United States were from Russia.

In 1995, the refugee admissions ceiling for the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe was 48,000. This ceiling was reduced in 1996 to 45,000, as there were a decreased number of asylum seekers from Eastern Europe due to democratic reforms. The admission ceiling was increased to 48,000 in 1997 with the largest numbers of refugees coming from the NIS and the former Yugoslavia.

### Bosnia

A Bosnian refugee admission program was established in 1993 for Bosnians of special humanitarian concern to the United States. Those eligible were vulnerable Bosnian Muslims and couples in mixed marriages referred for resettlement by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). This group included former detainees, torture victims, and women victims of violence as well as Bosnian Muslim relatives of U.S. citizens, lawful permanent residents, asylees, or refugees. In 1996, the 3,000 unallocated refugee funded admissions were used to address the ever-growing number of Bosnians seeking asylum. The numbers of refugees from Bosnia increased from 1,485 in 1995 to 21,357 in 1997. Additionally, the 1997 Dayton Peace Accord expanded eligibility to all Bosnians to allow reunification of close family members, regardless of ethnicity.

In 1996, the United States granted Temporary Protected Status to Bosnians living in the United States. In 1995 and 1996, Bosnian asylum applications had among the highest approval rates. In 1996 and 1997, Bosnians were the third largest group of refugees resettled in the United States.

## Middle East

In Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and Egypt, depressed economies continued to create pressures for emigration, particularly to the United States. The return home of Egyptian, Jordanian and Palestinian guest workers from the Gulf further added to this impetus. The exodus of Lebanese during the 16-year civil war continued to have derivative effects, as family members joined “anchors” already in the United States.

Terrorism by radical Islamic groups, especially the 1993 World Trade Center bombing in New York City and concerns about the potential for future acts of terrorism, resulted in stricter security measures in the screening of immigrants worldwide. These measures included improved name check capabilities at overseas U.S. missions.

Israel continued to address the challenge of integrating the huge influx of immigrants from the former Soviet Union into Israeli society. Many had subsequently sought onward emigration to the United States.

### Iraq

The number of Iraqi refugees resettled in the United States continued to decline from its peak in 1995 of 4,984 admissions to 2,679 admissions in 1997. Even with this decline, Iraqi asylum applicants had the highest approval rates, at 94.7 percent in 1997. Post-Gulf War refugee application processing for Iraqis continued in Turkey, in processing posts in Europe, and from camps in Saudi Arabia. In 1995, 3,000 Iraqi refugees were resettled from the Rafha refugee camp in Saudi Arabia, where the United States has participated since 1992 in a multi-country resettlement effort led by the UNHCR.

The refugee admission ceiling for the Middle East/South Asia region declined from 5,000 in 1995 to 4,000 in 1997. This decrease was due to indications from the Government of Saudi Arabia that it would fund resettlement of a significant number in Iran.

## South Asia

Emigration from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh continued at high levels in 1995 to 1997. While many immigrants from South Asia arrive bearing family or employment-based visas, illegal immigration through identity or document fraud remains significant.

### India

India ranked fourth in the top 10 countries to receive U.S. immigrant visas in the 1995-1997 period. India's explosive economic growth in certain sectors, especially the computer industry, sparked an ever-rising demand for employment-related non-immigrant visas, as the Indian computer sector developed a link with its U.S. counterpart. Although such visas do not bestow U.S. permanent residence on the bearer, in practice, many such visa holders subsequently adjust status to U.S. permanent residence and eventually become U.S. citizens. Large numbers of Indian students who come to the United States for university education also eventually adjust to U.S. permanent resident status. The movement of Indian computer experts and students adds to well established immigration patterns generated by natives of India already in the United States, thus maintaining immigration from India at significant levels.

### Pakistan

Similarly, emigration from Pakistan continued unabated from 1995 to 1997. Pakistanis continued to be one of the top 10 nationalities who are issued U.S. immigrant visas. There were large numbers of unemployed and underemployed young men and women in Pakistan, even those with some technical and professional skills, who were eager to seek better prospects outside Pakistan.

## East Asia

### China

Since the 1980's, Chinese students have comprised the largest foreign student population in the United States. The experience of the U.S. Embassy in Beijing and Consulates General in Guangzhou, Shanghai, Chengdu and Shenyang is that Chinese students generally prolong their stay in the United States, exhausting all educational possibilities and then seeking legal means to adjust status.

The number of immigrant visas issued to the Chinese was consistently in the top 10 countries receiving U.S. immigrant visas from 1995 to 1997. China posts saw a dramatic increase in fraudulent employment-based non-immigrant visa applications. Guangzhou reports that many applications in this visa category were based on fraudulent or non-existent businesses or fraudulent job offers.

Chinese organized alien smuggling has been of particular concern to a number of government agencies. Efforts to engage the Chinese government and other countries with known staging areas for smuggling Chinese into the United States have increased significantly since 1990.

In 1996, Congress passed legislation that modified the definition of *refugee* in a way favorable to Chinese asylum applicants. The law defined resistance to persecution under China's coercive one-child policy (e.g. forced sterilization and abortion) as one form of persecution for political opinion.

### Hong Kong

Hong Kong has a steadily increasing population, reaching 6.8 million in 1998. Hong Kong reverted to Chinese sovereignty on July 1, 1997, although it retained considerable autonomy, except in the areas of defense and foreign relations. A special immigrant visa program established by the 1990 Immigration Act provided immigration opportunities for Hong Kong-based employees of U.S. firms. The law permitted applicants to use the visas as a safety net, requiring them to have immigrated before January 1, 2002. Unexpectedly, the program has not generated the interest its drafters had anticipated.

### Indochina/Vietnam

The protection and resettlement of Indochinese refugees remains a significant concern of U.S. policy in East Asia. The United States continued to work closely with both first asylum and resettlement nations and with the UNHCR to resolve the situation of the remaining refugees in the first asylum countries in Southeast Asia and Hong Kong. Under the Comprehensive Plan of Action, adopted by the 1989 International Conference on Indochinese Refugees, the United States and more than 50 other resettlement countries had pledged to resettle newly arriving asylum seekers who were found to be bona fide refugees.

The Comprehensive Plan was successful in dramatically reducing new arrivals and facilitating voluntary repatriation. By the end of 1995, the United States completed all processing for direct resettlement of Vietnamese refugees from first asylum camps of Southeast Asia and Hong Kong. As a result, the refugee admission ceilings were lowered from 40,000 in 1995 to 10,000 in 1997. The numbers of refugees resettled in the United States has dropped by more than half since 1995, from 80,000 in 1995 to 35,000 in 1997. Even with this decline, Vietnamese refugees continued to be the second highest in numbers of refugees resettled in the United States.

The U.S. Orderly Departure Program (ODP) from Vietnam continued to be a major area of cooperation between the two countries, allowing for the processing of former reeducation-camp prisoners, former U.S. Government employees, former employees of private U.S. organizations, and Amerasian immigrants for resettlement in the United States. Immigrant visa petitions are also processed under the ODP, and the Vietnamese continued to be in the top 10 countries to receive U.S. immigrant visas.



In January 1997, the United States negotiated an agreement with Vietnam on the implementation of the Resettlement Opportunity for Vietnamese Returnee (ROVR) program inside Vietnam. Under ROVR, returnees to Vietnam were allowed to register for a resettlement interview in Vietnam to determine if they qualified under a broad set of criteria as being of “special interest” to the United States. This program was designed to encourage the remaining screened-out camp populations to return to Vietnam voluntarily and to ensure that persons of special interest to the United States had an opportunity to pursue resettlement once in Vietnam. Some 9,000 individuals registered to participate in ROVR, and an additional 4,500 – 5,000 who returned between October 1995 and April 1996 may still register.

## Africa

With some six million refugees, sub-Saharan Africa hosts about a third of all the world’s refugees. In 1995, the African refugee landscape continued to be dominated by refugees in the “Great Lakes” region – Rwanda, Burundi, Tanzania, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In light of the volatile political and ethnic circumstances in many African countries, refugee-processing posts in Africa were authorized to process, without prior authorization from Washington, applications by nationals of an African country who were referred to the U.S. program by UNHCR. In 1997, there was an expansion of the African resettlement program and a greater reliance on UNHCR for refugee referrals, which created a more flexible program and more diverse African caseloads.

From 1995 to 1997, U.S. refugee admissions from Africa remained at about 7,000 a year. These were primarily Somalis, Sudanese, Liberians and Ethiopians. Most of the processing was carried out in Kenya with remaining African admissions coming from other refugee processing posts in Africa and Europe. During the 1995-1997 period, asylum applications from Somalia and Sudan had the highest approval rates among African countries. In 1996, Somalis were the fourth largest group of refugees to be resettled in the United States.

Although immigration to the United States from Africa has risen somewhat in recent years, Africa nevertheless accounts for a relatively small percentage of immigrants to the United States. There has been considerable interest from African countries in the Diversity Visa program, which allocates visas to countries with a low rate of immigration. Applicants for this program are selected in an annual lottery. In 1995 (compared to 1994), Africa saw an increase in issued U.S. immigrant visas of 153 percent to 28,514 visas, a direct result of many African countries qualifying in the Diversity Visa category.

This page is intentionally left blank.